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SECOND ADDRESS

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

THE

PRELATES

OF

ENGLAND AND WALES,

ON THE SUBJECT

OF THE

SLAVE TRADE.

Μη νεμεσα βασιλεύ—

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Mr LORDS,

I addressed your Lordships on the subject of the **ABOLITION** of the **SLAVE TRADE** about three years ago, when there was a probability that, by the strenuous and united exertions of your venerable Bench, that important object might have been accomplished in a manner honourable to yourselves, honourable to the nation, and infinitely beneficial to the wretched Natives of Africa. In addressing your Lordships, I endeavoured to express myself in language void of offence: such is my intention in this second obtrusion upon your notice, in which how-

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ever you will be frankly told the sentiments of a plain man, a friend of his country, and of his species, and whose happiness is too much connected with the *mens conscientia recti*, to give much heed to the favours or the frowns of men. Permit me then, my Lords, to expostulate with you on your conduct, during the consideration of this important question in your honourable House. You well know with what degree of attention the question has been investigated during the three last sessions ; and it is my business, in the name of the Friends of Humanity, to press upon the consideration of your Lordships, whether you have, as distinguished teachers of the practical truths of the Christian religion, discharged your duty to God and to men, in using your utmost endeavours to bring the momentous question of the Abolition of the Slave Trade to a speedy and to a just decision, by seconding the manly efforts of your brother of Rochester. To answer this inquiry to your own consciences, and to

to your country, it will not avail you, indeed it would be much out of character, to plead the pressure and importance of the occurrences of the times, namely the weighty business of peace and war: for your Lordships, in the multiplicity of your engagements, amidst these pressing occurrences cannot forget, seeing it is your province to teach others, that there is a Judge of all the earth, who will do right, who will make retribution to nations, as well as to individuals, for the violation of the precepts of virtue, and the principles of eternal justice. Allow me, therefore, earnestly to request, that your Lordships, as the ghostly fathers of the people, will study to give us some light and information on the subject, and tell us whether the dire calamities that have befallen this country, to say nothing of what are impending, may not, in some shape, be connected with the sanguinary and nefarious conduct of this nation towards the inhabitants of Africa. It is not, my Lords, an idle dream to

speak of the calamities of my country. Seated in the lap of affluence, and surrounded with plenty, your Lordships are, perhaps, not much acquainted with the distresses that overspread the land. The great body of the people of England are the labouring poor, who are employed in toils of husbandry, or of manufacture ; to these, except the few that are engaged in branches peculiarly lucrative, the present enormous price of provisions has rendered animal food, that important necessary of life in this climate, inaccessible ; and even vegetable food, particularly bread, is nearly at double its usual price.*

With the great mass of people in this country, therefore, the emaciated spectre of *Famine* is an inmate, as much as if the

* Notwithstanding this calamitous situation of things, the distilleries are suffered to go on. What a miserable and mistaken policy must it be, to sacrifice the health and lives of the inhabitants, and of the most essential part of the population of a country, to the paltry consideration of revenue !

calamity was universal. Permit me now, my Lords, to call your attention for a moment to what has lately occurred in this metropolis; namely, a mortality during the month of February that is, perhaps, unparalleled, except in times of raging *pestilence* ;* nor have the counties escaped this awful visitation. When to these painful events we add the dreadful havock and carnage that *War* is making amongst our countrymen, whose blood deluges the plains of Germany, what can we think, my Lords, but that the scourge of heaven is upon us, in the fearful forms of famine, pestilence, and war? Now the object I have in view in touching upon these unpleasant topics, is, consistently with that with which I set out, to induce your Lordships to exercise your great erudition and knowledge of ancient lore, in displaying the ways of Providence to man; in teaching your infatuated country-

*The deaths were at the rate of 40,000 a year; the usual number is about 19,000.

men, and especially those in authority who sanction the practice of the Slave Trade, that by violating the strongest obligations of morality, and trampling upon the sacred duties of religion, the nation will inevitably meet with that retribution of which your Lordships can best point out examples in the history of ancient times, Whether you turn your attention to the Assyrian or Macedonian monarchy to the eastern or western empire at Byzantium or Rome,

Ισορια εσιν η φλοσοφια δια των παραδειγματων διδασκεσσα.—

I do not mean to offend your Lordships, but I seriously wish you to consider, if you should deign to investigate this subject, whether we have not a striking instance of Divine vengeance in what lately befel the wretched remains of the British army in their retreat through the deserts of Westphalia. Or what think you, my Lords, of the horrible devastation and carnage, by pestilence and the sword, that have lately happened in our West India Islands,

Islands, the very scene of the most disgraceful and inhuman treatment of our fellow-beings? If these things are so, my Lords, is there not a cause? Nor will it be a task unworthy of your function, to explain to the nation, and more particularly to your associates, the rulers of the land, the ways of God to man; and to depict, in that forcible language of which your pens are capable, the inevitable course of divine justice towards those, whether of high or low degree, who violate its immutable principles.

“ Rarò antecedentem scelestum

“ Deseruit pede poena clando.”

HOR.

It is therefore particularly to be wished that your Lordships would, with all possible diligence, acquit yourselves of the important duty of informing the minds of the people of this land, and especially of the higher orders of society, in relation to the indispensible obligations of morality and virtue; which your Lordships well know

know are not exclusively binding upon the inhabitants of any particular island or district of country, but are an indispensable duty to every description of the human species, whether of high or low degree, whether with white faces or with black. I say, my Lords, it is particularly necessary that you bestir yourselves in the discharge of your pastoral duties; because an opinion seems to be gaining ground in this island, that the princely incomes which your Lordships possess, are not necessary to the maintenance of virtue and religion amongst its inhabitants. How consolatory then will it be to your Lordships, in that change of affairs which may be at hand, that a large portion of your abundant revenues has been appropriated to relieve the afflicted, to mitigate the sorrows and the wants of the wretched and the poor, throughout your respective dioceses ! But your duties, my Lords, are not confined to the poor; it is incumbent upon all to promote the well-being of

of society, by promoting the practice of morality and virtue: to you it seems peculiarly to belong to teach the *rulers of the land* righteousness and wisdom, the genuine result of the principles of Christianity. Having then access to the highest orders of the community, in the moments of relaxation from business or study, when the heart is open to the monitions of wisdom, teach the nobility, my Lords, teach the sons of your sovereign, that to be respected their conduct must be respectable; and to be respectable, it must be accompanied with that dignified sincerity of action which appertains to the practice of virtue, and requires a strict adherence to the principles of justice. Teach them that, in whatever light they view the inferior orders of men (whose esteem and good opinion it is nevertheless well worth their care to preserve), we are not in the practice of appreciating the turpitude of actions according to the rank or dignity of the agent inversely.

Teach

Teach them that, though surrounded with affluence, and the amplest means of gratification, tending to impress the idea of vast superiority and distinction, yet by the eye of Infinite Power and Goodness, the poor and the humble are beheld with equal regard. On this subject, my Lords, listen for a moment to the sentiments of a distinguished author, versed in the constitution of man:—“ *Laisssez-moi preter l'oreille à ces commandemens qui viennent d'en haut ; laisssez-moi distraire mes regards du sceptre menaçant que tiennent en leurs mains les puissans de la terre ; laisssez-moi compter avec ce-lui, qui est plus grand qu'eux tous ; laisssez-moi sur-tout m'adresser à celui qui pardonne, à celui qui, au moment où je viens de l'offenser, me permet encore de l'aimer et de me fier à sa grace ! Ah ! sans l'idée d'un Dieu, sans ce rapport avec un Etre supreme, auteur de toute la nature, on n'auroit plus à écouter que les vils conseils d'une prudence personnelle : on n'auroit plus qu'à flatter,*

" flatter, qu'à adorer les maîtres des na-
 " tions, et tous ceux qui, dans un état
 " monarchique, sont les nombreux repre-
 " sentans de l'autorité du prince ! Oui,
 " les esprits, les sentimens, doivent flechir
 " devant ces dispensateurs de tant de biens,
 " et de tant de maux. S'il n'existe rien au-
 " dela des interets terrestres; et quand une
 " fois tout est incliné, tout est prosterné;
 " quand il n'y a plus de fierté dans les
 " caractères; les hommes deviennent in-
 " capables d'aucune grande action, et
 " impropres, pour ainsi dire, à aucune
 " beauté morale," *Necker, de l'importance
 des Opinions religieuses,*

If then, my Lords, the poor and the humble are objects of equal regard with the rich and the mighty in the view of the Great Parent of all, how indispensable the duty, that the rulers of the earth, and more particularly those that possess that distinction in the Christian world, should be sparing of the lives of the inferior orders of men, and cautious of sporting
 with

with their happiness. I mean, my Lords, to allude not only to the practice of the Slave Trade, carried on by this country to the Coast of Africa, and sanctioned, alas ! by your Lordships, as members of the British legislature ; the shocking enormities of which it is not necessary for me to dwell upon, after the ample opportunity your Lordships have had, during the investigation of this business, of making yourselves acquainted with the scenes of human agony and woe, and the premature loss of life, that are inseparable from its existence. And yet I must request your Lordships to look again at the short representation of this horrible mass of iniquity, given by your worthy associate, the Dean of Peterborough, in his excellent, I had almost said oracular, discourse, on the 25th of February, which your Lordships have undoubtedly already read with emotions of sorrow for the crimes of your country.

“ But what think you of our fanguinary
“ traffick in the persons of men? here
“ we

“ we are absolutely without excuse. We
“ fit out our ships with all the instruments
“ of destruction: we load them with
“ preparatory chains, and with engines of
“ torture. All this is done with cool and
“ previous deliberation, shewing a pre-
“ meditated resolution to enslave, to tor-
“ ture, to destroy. We fill these vessels
“ with bloody-minded ruffians, fitted for
“ every horrid purpose. Being superior
“ in brutal force, we assail far distant
“ nations, who have not done us any
“ injury; we attack the dwelling-places
“ of innocent and inoffensive men; we
“ rob them of their property; we lay
“ waste their possessions with fire and
“ sword; we force away their natural
“ proprietors without distinction, men,
“ women, children, to captivity, to tor-
“ ture, to public sale like beasts of bur-
“ then, to unceasing misery, and to pre-
“ mature death! And this is COMMERCE,
“ This is the SLAVE TRADE—Words
“ which are every where pronounced
“ without

“ without any convulsive horror, or in-
 “ deed any apparent sense of the enor-
 “ mity.—**EXECRABLE!**”—

I mean also, my Lords, to allude to *War*, the offspring of ambition, or of a base spirit of revenge. And on this subject it does not become me to entertain a doubt of the concurrence of the ministers of peace, when I express the most pointed abhorrence of a practice so incompatible with the precepts and example of your Divine Master, the Prince of Peace! Is it not strange, my Lords, that men who have been educated in the principles of Christianity, should eagerly encounter the greatest difficulties, in order to embrue their hands in each other's blood, and this without any personal enmity towards, or previous knowledge of, each other? And by whatever motives the officers and commanders may be actuated, the common men have scarcely a motive of interest to goad them on to such deeds of death. Can your Lordships

Lordships conceive any thing more monstrous or irrational, in the nature of any of the brutal race? May I now be allowed to ask your Lordships what you think of our renowned warriors, these men of blood, these heroes of the field? Are they not, like their great prototypes, the Alexanders and Cæsars of antient days, the mere butchers of the human species?— Appreciate their characters and occupation, my Lords, by the contents of the New Testament, and then say whether I do them wrong in denouncing them as mere Man-butchers, whose fame will sink under the execrations of posterity, when men shall wisely and practically adopt the peaceful tenets of the Christian system; a system calculated to unite in the bond of friendship and brotherhood all the human race. But let us now, my Lords, take a view of this bloody business under another aspect. Man is a being endowed with reason and inspired with life by the fiat of Omnipotence; and it belongs not to himself,

himself, or to any other, but to the Author of his being alone, to deprive *him of that boon. Whatever mortal then, whether king, pope, or minister of state, (stations of awful tenure) that dares to invade the prerogative of heaven, and impiously assume the sovereignty of life, by subjecting their fellow-creatures to the slaughter of war, will assuredly be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of infinite justice, where pleas of ambition or revenge, or even of political necessity, will not avail against the voice of him who sits as Judge; against the voice of him whose injunction is, “ Love your enemies; do good to “ them that hate you.”

I cannot dismiss the subject of this address, my Lords, without earnestly soliciting you seriously to reflect, whether

* It is not meant to make an exception in the case of crimes, which might be prevented more effectually, and much more beneficially to the community, by other punishments, than the deprivation of life: but this is not the present business.

in the momentous occurrences of the times, you have faithfully discharged the important duties that are peculiarly connected with your function ;—whether when public measures have been proposed to your consideration, which, originating in pride or avarice, are utterly irreconcileable with national honour or national justice, you have manfully and conscientiously opposed your well argued votes. But as the distinguished ministers of a dispensation that breathes Peace and Good-will to man, your Lordships have a more imperious duty, that supersedes even that which attaches to your legislative character ; to whom so properly as to you can the nation look in the present calamitous state of things, as well as in that which is impending (of which your Lordships will form your own judgment) to interpose your zealous exertions against the progres of violence and injustice, to interpose your earnest prayers for a general

neral reform of conduct, by which may be wiped away the *stain of blood* that is upon us.

FINIS.

